



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
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Michael F. Easley
Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary, DENR

PARKS GRANTS HIT RECORD LEVEL

A record \$8.84 million was distributed to local governments for parks and recreation projects through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund in May.

The Parks and Recreation Authority, the appointed panel that judges applications, approved grants to 50 counties and municipalities from among 74 applications requesting a total \$13.4 million in this year's funding cycle.

Since the program began 10 years ago, there have been 367 grants channeling \$57.32 million into recreation projects across the state, from modest neighborhood parks to ambitious greenway networks and all-purpose community centers.

Projects have been approved in all but two of

North Carolina's 100 counties.

The \$8.84 million awarded May 21 represents revenues into the trust fund from the first three quarters of fiscal 2003-04. Fourth-quarter revenues will be allocated in July to others within this year's pool of applicants.

The NC General Assembly created the trust fund in 1994 on the heels of a successful bond issue that raised \$35 million for state parks projects. The fund is supported through a portion of the state's excise tax on real estate deed transfers.

Trust fund allocations are split between state and local recreation needs, with 65 percent earmarked for state parks land acquisition and capital projects.

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FORT FISHER PERMITS PASS 1,000 MARK ***HOURS OF BEACH ACCESS EXTENDED FOR 4WD VEHICLES***

The number of annual vehicle access permits issued at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area passed the 1,000 mark last month, while park staff also issued a similar number of daily permits for four-wheel-drive vehicles on the beach.

The permit system has been generally well accepted by park visitors if they feel the fees of \$10 a day or \$40 a year are tied somehow to protecting the coastal environment, according to park staff members.

The fee system was

implemented in February as part of a broader fee restructuring approved by the 2003 General Assembly. It serves not only as a revenue source, but as a resource management tool to help protect the four miles of beachfront that is frequented by 16 rare species including the loggerhead sea turtle and piping plover.

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A few months after legislators approved the fee system, the division reviewed with the local citizens' Park Advisory Committee a program to limit nighttime vehicle access to the beach. Historically, the beach had been open to four-wheel-drive vehicles 24 hours a day.

As part of the access plan, the Division of Parks and Recreation at first moved to limit the hours of access to those when the park was open – normally from 8 a.m. until sunset. Those

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Bryan Butler was hired at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area as a Maintenance Mechanic II. He has more than 12 years as a foreman, 21-plus years as a service manager and six years in construction.

Brooks Denmark is a new General Utility Worker at William B. Umstead State Park. He has a bachelor's degree in business administration from

Barton College and more than four years experience in maintenance.

Maryann Mickewicz is the new Office Assistant III at Gorges State Park. She has a bachelor's degree in management/marketing and more than two years experience as an office assistant.

Kelly Chandler was hired at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area warehouse

operations as an Office Assistant III. She has a bachelor's degree in English from UNC-Greensboro and three years experience as an inventory supervisor and sales representative.

Lee Anne Humphries was promoted to the Park Superintendent I position at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. She has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management and more than 13 years experience with the division.

Katharine Kellon was promoted to Park Ranger II at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. She has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation and more than two years of work-related experience.

Larry Hyde was promoted to Park Ranger III at Lake Norman State Park. He has a bachelor's degree in administration/natural resources and more than 19 years experience as a park ranger with city and state park systems.

Michael Hagie was promoted to Park Ranger III at Falls Lake State Recreation Area. He has an associate's degree in natural and physical science and more than five years experience as a park ranger.

Mark Pritchard was promoted to a Park Ranger II at Lake Norman State Park. He has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management and more than four years experience as a park ranger with the division.

William Jarman was promoted to a Park Ranger III at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. He has a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife sciences and more than two years experience as a park ranger.

From The Director's Desk

Department Secretary Bill Ross stopped in at the recent meeting of the Parks and Recreation Authority to brief members on the so-called COPS bill (Senate Bill 1064). He told them that, in the short term, the proposal may be the best way to build North Carolina's "green infrastructure".

The legislation would allow the state to issue certificates of participation, essentially borrowing funds against revenues flowing into the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Leveraging the trust funds in this way will allow us to act quickly on land acquisition projects at a time when large blocks of important conservation lands are being put on the market.

Secretary Ross told the authority that even a modest borrowing plan – designating some \$4 million of trust fund revenues each year – would raise \$50 million immediately under a 20-year repayment plan. Projects that could quickly move forward include a 3,000-acre addition at Lake James State Park and establishment of new parks on the Haw and Mayo rivers.

The state parks system has not only been a good steward of North Carolina's natural resources over the decades, but under the guidance of the Parks and Recreation Authority, is proving to be a conscientious steward of the trust fund that has brought us so far in the past 10 years. That's reflected in the legislative and popular support for this proposal.

Secretary Ross and some of the authority members have said that, in the long term, another revenue stream, such as a bond issue, might be needed to fully take advantage of conservation opportunities. Until then, the proposal for certificates of participation could give us yet another opportunity to show our resourcefulness and stewardship.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

TILLOTSON NEW PARKS SUPERINTENDENT

Susan Tillotson, a 23-year veteran with the state parks system, has been promoted to Superintendent of State Parks. She succeeds Lewis Ledford who was named director of the division in February.

As the chief operations officer for our system of 28 state parks, four state recreation areas and 17 state natural areas, Tillotson's responsibilities will include park operations, resource management efforts, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance.

Tillotson performed similar duties during the past 11 years as the north district superintendent, one of four district superintendents in the system.

"I'm pleased the division has someone as capable as Susan to step into this pivotal position," Ledford said. "She is a detail-oriented person, and has distinguished herself in leadership roles above and beyond her normal duties, including service on our expansion committee to conserve new areas, representing the parks system in sustainability initiatives of our department and managing our annual law enforcement training."

Tillotson was reared in north-central North Carolina near Kerr Lake State Recreation Area and spent much time at the lake with family. She began working there during the summers after graduating

from high school in 1975. She graduated in 1979 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a bachelor's degree in health and physical education.

After working briefly as a teacher at the Masonic Home for Children in Oxford, NC, she joined the parks system full time as a Park Ranger I at Kerr Lake. She became superintendent of Eno River State Park in 1986, and was promoted to the district superintendent position in December 1992.

"I aspire to be the leader that our folks in green and gray, and those who support them at the Yorkshire and district offices, deserve," Tillotson said. "I pledge to work hard, be fair and draw from my experience and lessons learned from those who have been my mentors."

She added, "There is, in my opinion, no work that is more important than the work we do in state parks and there are, in my opinion, no better people to work with than the dedicated employees of this division."



CHRIS HELMS TO LEAD LAKE WACCAMAW

Chris Helms has been promoted to superintendent of Lake Waccamaw State Park in Columbus County.

Helms has been a Park Ranger II at Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve in Southern Pines since 1997. As the park's superintendent, he succeeds Adrian O'Neal who was promoted to east district superintendent earlier this year.

A native of Jacksonville, Helms attended White Oak High School and is a 1991 graduate of the University of North Carolina-Wilmington with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management.

He served one year as a seasonal ranger at Fort Macon State Park before being hired as a Park Ranger I at Jones Lake State Park in October 1991. He joined the staff at Weymouth Woods in 1997. He and his wife Shelley, originally of Wilmington, have two children, Rachel, 5, and Allison, 3.

Lewis Ledford, director of the division, said, "Chris brings with him excellent experience in

natural resources management from his work at Weymouth Woods, and that will serve him well in addressing the unique challenges at this state park. I'm confident he will become a valued member of the community in Lake Waccamaw and Columbus County."

Helms said he is excited about the prospects for natural resource management at Lake Waccamaw.

"I've enjoyed being a ranger for 12 years, but I felt this was a great opportunity in an area that I'm familiar with," he said.

Lake Waccamaw State Park was established along the southeastern shore of that state-owned bay lake in 1976. It now encompasses 1,734 acres and has reported annual visitation of more than 88,000.



MANY HAD A PART IN NEW JORDAN TRAIL

It takes persistence to hike some trails. Then, there are those trails where it takes persistence just to get them built.

The New Hope Overlook Trail at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area qualifies on both counts.

Rangers dedicated a 2.5-mile loop of the new trail on June 5 – National Trails Day – roughly 10 years after the New Hope Recreation Area opened and rangers began planning for a trail to showcase the views from Chatham County's highest ridge.

Hurricane Fran, a devastating ice storm and floods all contributed to the trail's design, in a fashion, as debris prompted re-routing and delayed construction. Over the years, at least seven rangers, past and present, two eagle scouts and about a dozen volunteers and seasonal employees were involved in making the trail a reality.

"This trail has had a history of struggles, to say the least," Park Superintendent Billy Totten said at the dedication ceremony.

Last October, Totten was able to dedicate two seasonal employees to the job. Greg Roper and David Percell were assigned to work under the direction of Ranger Bryan Cox.

Although neither had practical trail-building experience, Roper is an avid hiker and both had a great deal of personal motivation. They spent six months cutting through vegetation, digging out rocks, hauling rocks, piling rocks, cutting side slopes and removing debris, with only



SEASONALS DAVID PERCELL, LEFT, AND GREG ROPER WORK ON A BRIDGE FOR NEW HOPE OVERLOOK TRAIL.

hand tools and a motorized wheelbarrow.

Two boy scouts also completed projects on the trail to earn eagle scout status. Along the first mile of the trail, Christopher Ertel established a short spur to an overlook. David Church built two footbridges.

The resulting trail is beautiful and challenging, offering some spectacular views of Jordan Lake, a variety of wildflowers and ferns, groves of mountain laurel, lush creek crossings and some serious hills to climb. The trail also links two hike-in campgrounds.

There are also historical resources along the trail. The New Hope River valley that was flooded by the lake's creation was first explored about 1701 and by 1810, a network of farms there was linked to Pittsboro, the county seat. It became a logging center in the early 1900s as railroads pushed through the area.

In 1945, a disastrous hurricane struck the valley, prompting Congress to authorize the building of the New Hope dam. The dam, now called B. Everett Jordan Dam, was completed in 1981.

The rangers involved in creating the trail were Totten, Mark Flaughter, Henry Boswell, Sue McBean, Mark Smith, Bryan Cox and James Ledgerwood.

Other seasonal and volunteer workers included Jody Campbell, Rita Cunningham, Neil Drakage, Brian McDowell, Cole Horton, Jennifer Macon, Judy Conrad and Diana Wray.

(Rangers Sue McBean and James Ledgerwood contributed to this report.)



RANGER SUE MCBEAN LEADS THE FIRST GROUP OF HIKERS ONTO A 2.5-MILE SECTION OF THE TRAIL.

WILDATHON YIELDS SPECIES SURPRISES

Mother Nature loves all her weather patterns – the good, the bad and the ugly. On May 3, she dealt out a little of each for the 2004 Falls Lake Wildathon.

Severe storms eased just in time for the 4th Annual Wildathon, allowing park ranger Brian Bockhahn to trek through Falls Lake State Recreation Area and count flora and fauna for charity. Throughout a 24-hour period, Bockhahn scoured the park, recording every animal and wildflower he encountered. Each species sighting earned him points towards cash pledges.

The Wildathon earnings of approximately \$300 were donated to the Mason Farm Biological Reserve and the North Carolina Coastal Islands Sanctuary.

Bockhahn began his long day at 4:30 a.m. to the call of chorus frogs and peepers. Normally silent this late in spring, the animals were unseasonably induced by the cold weather. Bockhahn set off looking for three owl species usually found at reliable sites throughout the park. The birds proved elusive, however, as they would throughout the day.

As dawn broke Bockhahn saw a lone beaver returning to its lodge, and heard a plethora of bird song. Within 20 minutes he had recorded more than 30 bird species including two Wildathon first-timers – a Kentucky warbler and a late-singing hermit thrush.

After tallying 10 more species of birds at Sandling Beach, Bockhahn spent the next few hours deep in the Woodpecker Ridge Management Area. Here, he had always been able to count all six woodpecker species known to the area, but the downy woodpecker eluded him all day. Perhaps as a conciliatory prize, Bockhahn recorded a single palm and worm-eating warbler and a bank swallow for only the second time in the event's history.

The day's most impressive find appeared at the tip of the Woodpecker Ridge peninsula. Bockhahn spied one mixed flock of more than 150 swallows roosting in two small willow trees. In one binocular field he quickly counted all five possible swallow species perched in a single tree.

Midway through a Wildathon, Bockhahn usually finds himself in the Brickhouse Road Waterfowl Impoundment Area. This year was no different. He had now collected more than 80 species and was ready to forge ahead. Bockhahn remained at the site until dusk for some evening birdwatching, all the while checking PVC pipes for green tree frogs and the swamps for red-bellied water snakes and



BOCKHAHN WORKS ON A BIRD CALLBACK SURVEY DURING HIS 24-HOUR WILDATHON AT FALLS LAKE.

yellow-belly slider turtles.

Asked how he managed to stay energized throughout the day, Bockhahn said, "I take a dinner break. I stopped at my house for a quick snack and heard an Acadian flycatcher and then saw a broad-winged hawk cruise through my carport. I love living in the park!"

After a break Bockhahn jumped on his bike, allowing him to improve his pace. He wanted to achieve a personal goal – breaking the record of identifying 107 bird species. Bockhahn reached his quota with two barred owls.

Continuing on, Bockhahn tried to locate great horned and screech owls. After hours of effort, he gave way to the wise birds and turned his final efforts to tallying fireflies and moths.

Fatigue was setting in and the night had become windy and cold. Flying squirrels would not be flying and owls would not be hooting. Bockhahn called it a night at 1:30 a.m.

The day did provide Wildathon 2004 with some first-time records. A green heron, two lesser yellowlegs, a white-crowned sparrow and a flock of bobolink premiered at the event. But perhaps the most surprising participant was a marsh rabbit.

"An old 1982 survey showed the marsh rabbit in southern Granville and Durham counties, but this coastal plain species is difficult to find even where it's abundant, let alone on the outer periphery of its range," said Bockhahn.

Bockhahn's final tally: 151 species, 21 hours of travel, 150 driving miles, 14 hiking miles, 18 biking miles, three liters of water and four meals of peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches. Said Bockhahn, "It was a very good day in its own right, even while lacking many usual 'gimmie's.'"

TRUST FUND

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Thirty percent is set aside for local grants, and the remaining five percent supports beach access projects.

The 11-member Parks and Recreation Authority represents all areas of the state and is appointed by the governor (3 members), the senate president pro tem (4 members) and the speaker of the house (4 members).

Local governments have credited the trust fund with helping cities refine their open space and recreation goals and with nurturing fledgling recreation programs in small communities and rural areas.

Each application is subjected to a complex scoring system by staff of the NC Division of Parks and Recreation and the Recreation Resources Service of North Carolina State University. The system weighs such factors as planning, site suitability, public input and long-term management ability.

The scoring system strives to create a level field for small towns and large cities. Grants – which

are matched 100 percent locally – have been as small as \$10,000. The maximum allowed is \$250,000.

The grants awarded in May included 24 for the maximum amount of \$250,000, and those included some small towns such as Bethel in Pitt County, Dillsboro in Jackson County and Granite Quarry in Rowan County.

The existence of the trust fund has prompted many small towns and communities to be more aggressive in planning recreation projects and seeking the maximum grant amount, said Mike Waters, executive director of the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Society.

At the other end of the spectrum, trust fund grants can help tiny communities complete a modest, but much-needed, project. This grant cycle included \$11,500 for improvements to a community park in Maysville in Jones County and \$12,000 to expand a park in Kingstown in Cleveland County.

FORT FISHER

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hours of access, however, were extended following a period of public comment. The hours were extended from 6 a.m. until sunset during summer months and to 24 hours a day from Sept. 15 through November.

“The decision to control access was made only after careful study and the best science-based advice we could find,” said Carol Tingley, the division’s chief of planning and natural resources.”

The division sought opinions from noted ornithologists, the Division of Coastal Management, the Audubon Society and other conservation organizations on what areas of the beach are important nesting areas for colonial shore birds and for the sea turtles, and on how to best manage those areas, Tingley said.

All concurred that allowing vehicles on the beach overnight hindered protection efforts. Some advocated eliminating four-wheel-drive access altogether.

“The most severe impacts of the vehicular beach access are realized at night when adult sea turtles come ashore; when the shore birds are at rest and when turtle nests are most likely to hatch,” according to the division’s Beach Access Management Plan for Fort Fisher.

There were also issues of vandalism and of safety. On several occasions, nesting areas were severely damaged by overnight visitors, and barricades around sensitive areas have been destroyed.

And, the division was concerned about having park visitors on the beach during hours when rangers

were not available. Vehicles frequently become stuck in the sand, and emergency response times can be long on that remote beach.

Nonetheless, opposition to the plan emerged, particularly among surf fishermen used to enjoying unrestricted access.

Recognizing the important role that fishing plays in the recreational mix at Fort Fisher, the park’s citizens advisory committee recommended re-opening the issue to public comment in March.

Based on comments – nearly evenly divided between opponents and proponents of controlled access – the division decided in April to extend the hours of access in the summer and fall months.

“That was a good faith effort to strike a proper balance between protecting a very fragile coastal environment and providing quality recreation,” said Lewis Ledford, division director. “It’s important to be sensitive to the sportfishing community and local economies that depend on it. We believe this plan is something that conservation-minded sportsmen can live with.”

The revised access plan depends much on the hard work of seasonal employees and volunteers who monitor sea turtle nests. During the fall fishing season, volunteers will be called upon to assist turtle hatchlings in their trek to the ocean by raking the sand smooth of tire tracks.

Maintaining the right balance between conservation and recreation will require that the park staff continue to monitor events at Fort Fisher and suggest refinements in the future, Ledford said.

North Carolina State Parks

Monthly Attendance Report 2004

PARK	APRIL 2004	TOTAL YTD APR. 2004	APRIL 2003	TOTAL YTD APR. 2003	% CHANGE (2003/2004)	
					APR.	YTD
Carolina Beach	23,872	58,294	21,975	61,997	9%	-6%
Cliffs of the Neuse	10,331	27,651	10,161	24,810	2%	11%
Crowder's Mountain	35,643	111,389	20,763	66,506	72%	67%
Eno River	29,382	90,471	30,166	77,549	-3%	17%
Occoneechee Mountain	3,923	11,917	3,839	4,350	2%	174%
Falls Lake	50,453	112,195	47,662	115,251	6%	-3%
Fort Fisher	71,354	183,538	69,989	176,339	2%	4%
Fort Macon	115,840	278,916	112,910	263,766	3%	6%
Goose Creek	14,443	46,976	11,843	39,004	22%	20%
Gorges	10,907	28,284	5,864	17,000	86%	66%
Hammocks Beach	12,399	33,117	12,555	37,311	-1%	-11%
Hanging Rock	30,500	72,327	28,260	68,776	8%	5%
Jockey's Ridge	90,056	166,426	90,995	248,664	-1%	-33%
Jones Lake	9,648	26,730	10,826	27,598	-11%	-3%
Jordan Lake	113,216	164,603	35,520	69,365	219%	137%
Kerr Lake	143,168	318,752	93,480	226,040	53%	41%
Lake James	24,953	56,555	14,450	37,824	73%	50%
Lake Norman	47,223	132,486	35,745	77,083	32%	72%
Lake Waccamaw	7,922	20,102	6,868	25,564	15%	-21%
Lumber River	4,170	16,245	6,795	14,240	-39%	14%
Medoc Mountain	4,535	12,794	5,207	9,071	-13%	41%
Merchant's Millpond	23,040	50,979	15,983	29,558	44%	72%
Morrow Mountain	24,730	70,900	20,314	58,538	22%	21%
Mount Jefferson	7,164	21,554	6,512	24,024	10%	-10%
Mount Mitchell	34,036	55,637	22,296	39,163	53%	42%
New River	7,869	23,846	7,668	26,856	3%	-11%
Pettigrew	9,686	20,994	11,389	28,618	-15%	-27%
Pilot Mountain	34,560	98,822	34,441	89,234	0%	11%
Raven Rock	11,725	34,458	12,422	33,785	-6%	2%
Singletary Lake	3,734	7,175	1,584	4,019	136%	79%
South Mountains	0	31,582	16,710	43,076	-100%	-27%
Stone Mountain	35,784	103,656	31,376	77,224	14%	34%
Weymouth Woods	4,243	15,532	2,812	9,870	51%	57%
William B. Umstead	45,623	144,372	31,987	79,105	43%	83%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,096,132	2,649,275	891,367	2,231,178	23%	19%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE

Safely done makes summer more fun

- ✓Protect against sun exposure by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on exposed skin.
- ✓See your doctor if you develop early signs of skin cancer: an unusual mole, a scaly patch or a sore that doesn't heal.
- ✓Keep arms and legs covered when outdoors in wooded areas to protect you from ticks and poisonous plants.
- ✓Be sure to drink plenty of water.



The Steward

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